

#### POPULATION—TRANSPORT—TAREN POINT—ACCESS ROAD NUCLEAR WASTE—CAULERPA

# What a start to 2001!

Year 2001 has started off with a bang—a number of significant issues in the spotlight!

March saw the Shire host a Sydney-wide **population** forum examining Sydney's Population Future. (See page 3.)

Transport has been high on the agenda following the formation of a new advocacy group known as CARTS (Citizens Advocating Responsible Transport for the Shire). CARTS has held a number of public meetings, partly to counter a new push for the construction of the M6 motorway which would effectively cut the Shire in half and isolate a small section of the Royal National Park. CARTS has distributed leaflets to thousands of rail commuters and has had hundreds of responses from concerned Shire residents. The upgrade of the existing rail service in the Shire as well as a push for light rail has been a focus of CARTS this year.

These and other transport issues were discussed in detail in a recent Transport

Forum convened by Sutherland Shire Council. Transport planners, representative from the RTA, Council, State Rail and the Environment Centre all presented perspectives on the transport situation in the Shire which, in many cases, is in crisis. Further follow-up action from the forum is now needed to maintain the momentum.

Developments at Taren **Point** have been the focus of recent attention. A proposal has been lodged with Council to develop a retirement village (under SEPP5) on former industrial land at Taren Point. The development comprises approximately 350 dwellings on a site which was once a garbage dump. Under the proposal, large scale filling will be necessary. There is also an Acid Sulfate Soil potential. So concerns are high that the adjacent wetlands of Woolooware Bay, which are utilised by endangered migratory birds, will be adversely impacted.

With the Council meeting of 9 April 2001, came the news that the **Woronora** (Northern) Access Road

will not be opened to traffic. This has been a 20 years long battle for the residents of Woronora Valley, who wish to preserve their quality-of-life and the village atmosphere of the Valley. A number of other options were considered including a bus-only option and improvements to roads conditions in Engadine.

A recent decision by a French Court to refuse the unloading of Australian spent fuel from the **Lucas Heights** reactor on a French dock highlights the fact that the issue of waste from the reactor is far from resolved. This whilst the Federal Government continues to push ahead with plans for a hugely expensive new reactor.

The spread of the invasive exotic algae **caulerpa taxifolia** in Port Hacking will continue to be a concern this year until an effective strategy to limit the spread and impact of the weed can be identified and implemented. (See page 4.)

What a start to the year it has been!

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## centre update

## by Jim Sloan, Executive Officer

The first quarter of this year has certainly taken off with a flurry of community activity. The Centre just seems to get busier and busier in this International Year of the Volunteer. SSEC is definitely a fine example of community volunteerism in action. A number of new volunteers have joined our ranks this year and I would like to welcome Pamela Arnold, Dr Troy Coyle, Hauoli Vi and Jane Northway.

I would also like to welcome new staff member Kathy Fook who, thanks to a Natural Heritage Trust Grant is the Centre's new Outreach Coordinator three days a week.

> Welcome, Kathy

Kathy hit the ground running in January by producing a support fact sheet on "Population & the Environment" in time for the Population Forum organised by Gordon Hocking on 3 March. Copies of the fact sheet are available on our website <a href="http://ssec.org.au">http://ssec.org.au</a> or can be picked up at the Centre. Over the next year Kathy will produce at least three more fact sheets and a report on another community forum in November on community sustainability.

The **Population Forum** on the 3rd of March was a total success, with over 300 participants and active debate on a number of issues related to a Sustainable Population for Australia. DUAP was noticeably absent; a pity they declined to participate. The success of this event both in economics and quality was definitely due to the excellent organisational abilities of Management Committee member Gordon Hocking. Many thanks Gordon!

Once again the Centre has had a bevy of community issues to contend

with, the largest being urban development. With developers once again trying to decrease Sutherland Shire's industrial land base through the back door, it reminds us of how urgent it is that the community remains vigilant. If we are to be a sustainable community, we must keep the commercial and industrial land that has been set aside, because businesses are important within the Shire.

The recent plunge of the Australian dollar is something that should be concerning all of us as it has a direct impact on our ability to protect and conserve our environment. A recent quote found in the Financial Magazine - Asia Money states: "More and more Australian corporations are considering dual listings, and even moving their primary listings to foreign stock exchanges to take advantage of greater liquidity overseas. Australia must act fast to avoid becoming a branch office to the world."

I spent a lot of time wondering why our dollar keeps falling against other currencies (for example by 23% against the Mexican pesos). It is not because of a strong US currency any more, but because foreign currency investors do not appear to value it as much as in the past. While our foreign debt per capita has grown, it hasn't grown as much as that of countries like Canada which have over twice the foreign debt per person as Australia. Yet our dollar has dropped by 20% from \$.94CAN - \$1.00AUS to \$.76CAN - \$1.00AUS. I have to ask myself why. Is it because we have:

- *privatised* too many of our assets,
- under invested in research and development,
- degraded the quality of our educations system,
- fallen behind in *Information Tech*nology infrastructure or
- Failed to come up with a practical vision for the future?

All in all, if Australia is to keep control of its own destiny we must consider our international status very carefully. If Australia follows the US example over the Kyoto Agreement we may find the long-term impacts not to our liking.



The Centre's education strategies havebeen advancing nicely this quarter. We have Judy Illes now preparing our first comprehensive environmental educators kit. Under our sustainable communities outreach program we hope to have plenty more kits available in the coming months. Also the Centre is working with SCRAP, the Bower and the local NPWS environmental education centres to develop tools for local schools that will help them to develop their environmental policies.

#### News...

#### "Plan First"

DUAP has released this new White Paper which is examining possible changes to the existing planning system. Copies of the document are available from DUAP by phoning 1800 806 361 or email planfirst@duap.nsw.gov.au. Submissions on the White Paper close on 11 May 2001.

#### **Land Clearing**

Concerns have been raised over the large-scale clearing of significant vegetation in the vicinity of the Cronulla Sewage Treatment Plant. We are awaiting a formal response from Sydney Water and Bovis Lend Lease who are undertaking the plant upgrade.

#### **State of the Environment**

Sutherland Shire Council has recently released its latest *State* of the Environment Report for the Shire.

## port hacking

## Disintegration, degradation, and the way forward...

Waterways Authority Port Hacking Boating Draft Plan of Management advocates that the status quo is the right way to proceed.

Few people concerned with Port Hacking's environmental welfare would have argued that the current regime of managing Port Hacking's environment is okay. Yet this is the argument implicit in the Waterways Authority's recently released Boating Draft Plan of Management.

The draft plan of management comes after a campaign by several environmental groups calling on the government to take action to stop the relatively uncontrolled use and abuse of the Hacking waterway and its foreshores. Blatant vandalism and flouting of regulations as well as incremental "development" of infrastructure is taking a toll on the waterway that is reflected in:

- fewer public access points to the waterway
- fewer fish and marine life in general in the waterway
- more incidents of pollution, especially in the bays
- more conflicts between motorised and non-motorised users of the waterway
- less foreshore vegetation in urban areas of the foreshore

- more rubbish and weed infestations along the bush-lined foreshores
- increased noise from motorised vessels in all parts of the waterway
- increased crowding in bays with moored vessels.

In the face of this obvious deterioration of the quality of the waterway, the environment groups lobbied for a change in planning regimes and action. They called for clear statements of responsibilities for state agencies, local government and community for the protection of the Hacking waterway.

Although the draft plan purports to address and provide a strategy for dealing

with problems in the Port, its main action statement is basically a list of all programs currently being considered or underway. There is no acknowledgement that there are serious deficiencies with current unintegrated management practices. There is an advocacy for increased infrastructure to support waterways activities, predominantly boating. There is no genuine attempt in the plan to confront the major issues listed above which are causing the decline of the waterway's environment.

The inadequacy of the plan has caused environment groups, including the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre, the Sutherland Shire Council and several state agencies to severely criticise the draft. You can shortly read the Centre's submission on the Port Hacking Boating Draft Plan of Management on the Centre's website at www.ssec.org.au.

#### Miriam Verbeek



## population

### Population Forum attracts wide audience

An audience of over 300 people attended a Sydney-wide Population Forum held in Sutherland last month. The Forum, jointly sponsored by the Environment Centre, AESP, and Save our Sydney Suburbs, drew people from as far afield as Moree in the State's north west.

The Forum was officially opened by Dr Mary White and speakers included Federal Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs the Hon. Philip Ruddock (pictured), Professor Peter McDonald, Mr Martin Ferguson and NSW State MP, Michael Richardson.

Participants were welcomed to the Forum by Mayor of Sutherland Shire, Clr Tracie Sonda.

The Proceedings of the Forum will be available from the Centre shortly but you can access an online version via our website http://ssec.org.au To coincide with the Forum, the Environment Centre has produced a brochure 'Population and the Environment'; and you can also read an on-line version at our website.

Congratulations go to Gordon Hocking for his work in organising the Forum



Minister Ruddock



Councillor Sonda

## algae alert

## Another nail in the Basin

The toxic weed Caulerpa Taxifolia takes hold in Port Hacking

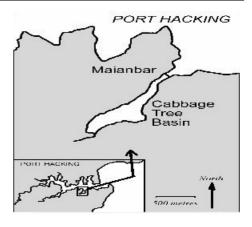
In 1900, the State Government of NSW decided Port Hacking needed a fish hatchery. The reason? People were complaining that there were not as many fish in the waterway as there used to be. The government also thought it should have the fish hatchery because of the serious deficiency of European fish in Port Hacking.

Don't laugh. It's true! A fish hatchery was built at Cabbage Tree Basin - one of the richest natural fish nurseries in Port Hacking. The Department of Fisheries objected to the idea of the fish hatchery because they thought the problems of lack of numbers of fish might have to do with overfishing and lack of understanding of native fish breeding patterns. Anyway, the Department did as it was told and built the hatchery. It dredged out 300,000 tonnes of sand and deposited it "out of the way", realigned the outlet to Cabbage Tree Creek and built locks and runs and all sorts of other impressive structures.

Records show that large numbers of fish were "released" into Port Hacking and its upper tributaries for fourteen years. In the fourteenth year, in one day, all the thousands of penned fish died. Not one fish survived! No one really knows why. Fisheries speculated it had to do with tides, muggy weather and excessive heat. Anyway, the hatchery was dismantled. And, guess what?

The Cabbage Tree Basin has been dying ever since because nothing has been done to stop the ongoing pressures to exploit everything it has to offer. Sand in the Port, mobilised during the dredging for the hatchery, mobilised even now with continued dredging, and from shellgrit mining in the 1920s, is being funnelled into the basin and has covered over 50% of the seagrasses. Seagrasses are essential for fish at various stages of their life cycle. The funnel for the sand is a rip that occurs as the tide comes in at the narrowed mouth of the Basin. The narrowing of the mouth is caused by infill to support a bridge carrying the waterpipe for Bundeena township.

So, there's less seaweed and less saltmarsh (also necessary for birds and marine life) - mostly because of pressure of deer and people trampling over the area—and there's less fish and less biodiversity of fish in the Basin, yet people



still happily fish there and pull out immature and small fish for their troubles.

And, just to add to the troubles of the Basin, there is the threat of *Caulerpa Taxifolia*, an invasive weed which blankets seagrasses, is toxic to fish and was probably introduced from overseas. This weed is already in several bays in Port Hacking. It is mostly spread vegetatively, like when anchors break it off and transport it to another part of the Port. Both National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Fisheries Department are worried about the spread of this weed but so far there's been little on-ground action or control measures.

If you want to read more about the Basin, visit the Centre's website at www.ssec.org.au/hacking If you want to read more about Caulerpa Taxifolia, visit the Fisheries website at www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au.

## Malo e lelei!

#### **Tongan greetings!**

During April the Centre will enjoy the company of Ms Hauoli Vi a visiting Communications Officer from Tonga. Here's her poem of greeting:

Nature treasures will live longer if it's looked after and managed properly!

Nature treasures will provide for you if you love to look after them!

But to see, to feel, to breathe, to taste, to drink and to share;

Ask yourself who, what, when, where, why and how;

You may not see to know it now, but you may later on.

Take heed and make way

Again, will it be worth it?

Malo e lelei! - greeting from the Friendly Island - the Kingdom of Tonga with a population of approximately 98,000 which spreads across 36 of our 170 islands, but most people live on the main island, Tongatapu. Tonga's economy is based on agriculture, The very fertile soil supports crops for local consumption and export. However, Tonga's small, open economy is vulnerable to fluctuations in world commodity prices

and is susceptible to natural disasters such as tropical cyclones.

Before I write any further, the name is Ms Hauoli Vi, a Communication and Media Officer for a National Non-profit Non-governmental Organisation for Women. However, the importance of the role that I'm involved in is communicating with the women and communities, in educating them through an Environ-



mental Awareness Program concerned with development issues.

The underlying objective for any community awareness program is to increase awareness and information with a view to changing attitudes and perception of the targeted groups so that they can practice what they believe in. Changing people's attitude is a process that cannot be achieved if information is not communicated clearly and creatively, therefore

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## What's next for Kurnell and Botany Bay?

With a ministerial intervention and an airport proposal, 2000 proved to be a tumultuous year for Kurnell but what does the year 2001 hold for the Peninsula and for Botany Bay?

One of the most pressing concerns this year is the review of aspects of the Peninsula's Regional Environment Plan which has been underway for a number of months. This review is the rather significant postscript to the Minister's decision to intervene on the Australand residential development, originally refused by Council in 2000. It will involve a review of zones and planning controls on the Australand site together with the sandmining and landfill sites owned by Breen. It is being overseen by the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning via an independent consultant, and a Reference Group comprising representatives from Council, the community and environment groups. Similar consultative groups for landholders, Commonwealth Departments, and State Agencies have also been established. A report and recommendations will be presented to the Minister by the middle of the year.

This month will see completion of the much-anticipated upgrade of the **Cronulla Sewage Treatment Plant**. The Bate Bay beaches have in recent times been amongst Sydney's most polluted, but there is indeed optimism over the likelihood of dramatic improvements in water quality on Cronulla's Beaches as a result of the upgrade.

The next twelve months are also likely to see significant progress for Botany Bay. The Healthy Rivers Commission is expected to release its Final Report this year which will provide recommendations to State Government on appropriate long-term goals for the health of the Bay and on the strategies needed to achieve these goals. Similar recommendations, including a preferred model-for-Bay-management, will also be provided by the Botany Bay Program (coordinated by local government, funded by Federal Government). In addition. the relatively new Southern Sydney Catchment Management Board is charged with the responsibility of developing a strategic plan for the catchment and with identifying the five key issues.

We could say then that perhaps never before will the environmental needs of Botany Bay and its catchments be as prominent within governments as they will be this year. In this respect, 2001 could well be a landmark year with some significant announcements to follow

Towra Point will also be a focus of attention this year. Following a State Government announcement on funding late last year, 2001 is likely to see work commence on the Environmental Impact Statement for beach nourishment at Towra. This has been identified as the preferred solution for the chronic erosion problems along Towra Beach. In addition, all other activities and programs at Towra in 2001 and beyond will be guided by a new Plan of Management.

The brief consideration given to the possibility of a Kurnell airport late in 2000 has roused Federal member Bruce Baird and Councillors into action in a push for a "workable plan" for the future of the Peninsula's natural environment and cultural heritage. During a recent meeting of Council's Kurnell Working Party, the suggestion of a new Kurnell Campaign Committee was raised. Clr Tracie Sonda has also canvassed this possibility in a recent Mayoral Minute (5/2/01). Such a committee would work in parallel with the existing Working Party and bring together MPs, Councillors and the community to "pursue the expansion of, or creation of, parkland on Kurnell Peninsula" through acquisition of privately owned land. Action from the first Committee meeting was to send a delegation to Canberra to meet Ministers Hill (Env) and Anderson (Transport), and Shadow Ministers Bolkus (Env) and Ferguson.

Many more positive initiatives will continue this year on the Peninsula including the eradication of **weeds** by landholders, Council and volunteers; together with the regular **litter removal** campaign on Captain Cook Drive.

So indications point to a positive year 2001 for the Kurnell Peninsula.

Simon Kimberley

# Annual Raffle - 2001

The Retreat at Wisemans Ferry has provided us with a Weekend Escape for two as 1st prize in this year's raffle. This includes all meals and accommodation.



Tickets will be sent out with the next Newsletter due around July. In supporting SSEC we acknowledge the tremendous support given by the management of The Retreat.

Just a short journey from Sydney, with its own 9 hole golf course and adjacent to the Dharug National Park, The Retreat is ideal for a weekend stay.

We have brochures at the Centre's office, or call them direct on 02 4566 4422 should you want to take visitors somewhere special, or just enjoy a break yourself.



#### SSEC Annual Dinner 26 October 2001

This year The Tradies have given us the auditorium as the venue for our Annual Dinner. In past years we have had to confine our numbers to 100, but we look forward to many more members and friends attending on Friday, 26 October 2001.

As well, it's our 10th Anniversary, so let's make it a big one. Pat and Ruth are working on a Federation theme, since everyone loves dressing up. So don't throw grandpa's old waist-coat and grandma's shot-taffeta skirt out just yet.

There will be prizes for costumes, trivia and an adventure mystery to solve. Ruth's working on the script, so some lucky people will be chosen for Indiana Jones character parts - but please no whips.

We guarantee it will be fun!

## enviro economics

## "Islands of understanding in areas of ignorance"

by Miriam Verbeek

Ian Lowe said that at a recent conference on the Future of Market Regulation. I rather liked the idea, because that's exactly where technology and its master science, have taken us so far.

In the olden days before all this science stuff, we used to have an integrated view of the world around us. True enough, it was often grounded in mystique but humans had no doubt that everything was connected to everything else and successful civilisations didn't forget that fundamental principle. When eventually they did, they floundered and died. The National Geographic usually does a nice job of explaining the root causes of the failure of most civilisations, and usually it's because a power group tries to "better" entrenched and integrated wisdom.

Ian Lowe's remark was one of many quotable ones given at the conference. His talk followed that by the former Premier Nick Greiner who was bemoaning the lack of progress made by the current state government in reforming the bureaucracy. He said the state was "going backwards". I spend a bit of time criticising the current government but usually because I think it's too easily sidetracked. I hadn't thought of it going "backwards". It was, therefore, with a deal of relief that Ian Lowe swept aside the dollars and cents argument of the former premier by noting: "Whether you are going backwards or forwards depends on which way you are facing."

The conference itself was pretty heavy, loaded with many buzz words from economists which had attendees complaining about the need for plain English. But the message was pretty clear: To slow down and eventually halt unsustainable practices needs changes in the way we coordinate our communities, make decisions about development, provide incentives for behaviour, make rules and judgements about activities, and value our resources.

One striking speaker was Chris Field, Executive Director from the Consumer Law Centre, Victoria. He noted that we used to think that a successful society

was one where everyone in society had access to essential services. At present, we are dismantling the infrastructures necessary to deliver this societal goal. At present, a typical low-income consumer

- be subject to credit checks to determine whether they are a suitable credit risk for the provision of essential services;
- face the possibility of a large up-front payment to be connected to supply - a payment they are unlikely to be able to
- have absolutely no guarantee that they won't be disconnected from an essential service simply because of their poverty;
- have their private and personal information shared, without consent;
- be unlikely to receive any price benefit.

He asked a question which he said too many of us don't ask as we strive to squeeze more "efficiency" gains through market deregulation: Do consumers really want to trade fundamental rights for small price benefits - price benefits that generally go to an already well-off group in society?

#### Malo e lelei! from page 4

the organisation needs to have a skill ful and resourceful communicator.

The Non-Profit Non-Governmental organisation is known as the Langafonua 'A Fafine Tonga (Women in Development) established in the 1950's by the late Queen of Tonga, Queen Salote Tupou III, who believed that it is necessary to both preserve and pass on the skills of traditional crafts and culture. Also to promote the advancement, welfare, security and the development of all. Its thrust is to continue to promote and enhance the total development of all women. In the late 90's, Langafonua has been identified as the Women's Umbrella Body to implement a community educational awareness program on development issues involving men and women (not just women this time).

Not only will the Langafonua Organisation benefit from skills and resources available from the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre but there will also be an incremental gain towards achieving the expected output from the Tonga Environmental Management Plan Project program in Environmental Education and Information disseminated through the media which I am responsible for in the Lagoon -Hauoli Vi Watch Project.

## fundraising

## What a day!

Wow! What a start to the year! Our first street stall for the year raised \$706.30 an all-time record! We concentrated mainly on selling books and plants, with unexpected results, some of us, myself especially, having been very sceptical of much success. Fortunately, we were

Many thanks to all who donated so generously a wide range of books in good and sometimes new condition, especially Bronwyn and Jim, Bob, Miriam and Lyn. What can I say about the wonderful range of beautiful, healthy plants prepared so lovingly by our own Dave Shirley, ably assisted by Dee and Bea Dennison.

Thanks to all of you and to those who gave other goods (cakes, sweets, jams, bric-a-brac). Thanks also to these who provided transport for the goods and to all who worked on the stall. March 24th was a great success!

Next stalls will be held in Gymea on
Saturday 21 April
and
Saturday 12 May

The May 12 stall will be the day before Mother's Day with a special raffle with 3 prizes donated by founding Centre member, Jean Rodger, and drawn on the day. Special thanks to you Jean!

Pat Elphinston

#### waste

#### Landuse for Landfills

There are many former landfill sites dotted through Sydney and the Shire but the question is, do you know where they are, or know whether they've been adequately cleaned-up, or whether any restrictions exist on landuse for these landfills?

In many cases, the use of former landfill sites includes open space or recreations such as playing fields and golf courses. But what of other land uses such as residential?

Development of former landfill sites for residential may have serious consequences if toxic contamination from the landfill begins to affect the health of future residents. The recent revelations of contamination affecting residents in the St George area (*Leader*, 15.2.01: "End of ordeal as waste removed") highlight the potential problems and subsequent costs involved in fixing problems which can be avoided in the first place.

Landfill gas seeping into houses and the exposure of waste in gardens are but two possible results from residential development on landfill sites. The risk is magnified when effective remedial management of a landfill has not taken place in the past.

Other potential risks can include:

- possibility of surface settling,
- need for continued monitoring,
- need for leachate collection, and
- need for gas control.

Options for reuse of an old landfill site include everything from digging it up

("mining") for redevelopment to using it to plant trees and turn it into a park. But it is often said of old landfills: "When you only cap, you keep a liability." In the United States it has now become common practice to mine (digup and remove) old landfills before the site is considered safe to build on.

Ground Water Pollution — landfill leachate can contain a wide variety of toxic metals, organic compounds, heavy metals including aluminium, antimony, arsenic, barium, benzene, cadmium, calcium, chromium, copper, cyanide, dioxins, furans, iron, lead, magnesium, manganese, mercury, PCBs, pesticides, potassium, silver, sodium, styrene and vinyl chloride (a human carcinogen). Most older landfills are unlined, and there is no way to estimate the size or potential clean-up cost of a leak before it happens, making ground water pollution economically as well as environ

mentally risky.

*Air Pollution* – some volatile organic compounds (VOCs) released by landfills are known or suspected carcinogens.

Odour Pollution – although these effects may not be a problem for the entire community, they will be a problem for residents living on an old landfill and may also be a problem for residents near a landfill. The closer one lives to a landfill, the more apparent these problems become.

**Health Issues** – potential health threats include accidental ingestion of and direct contact with contaminated liquid sludge, groundwater, or river sediments.

There are thus serious risk management problems attached to development of old landfills and it is little wonder why landuse is often restricted. - *J.S.*, *S.K.* 

# $\mathbf{w}_{\mathbf{c}}$



In March, the Centre launched its new Kurnell environment website to supplement the existing Kurnell History site. The new site includes information on the environmental aspects of the Peninsula (wetlands, reserves, endangered species, Green and Golden Bell Frog), a virtual tour of noteworthy sites, a perspective on current issues (including sand mining, weeds, sewage etc), and details about various environment and community groups and activities people can participate in.

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The address is http://ssec.org.au/kurnell/env

#### **Discounts on entertainment**

If you're interested in special offers on movie tickets, fine dining, art, leisure, sports, and casual dining, why not consider purchasing your copy of *The Entertainment Book*. In it you will find discount vouchers to florists, restaurants, movie cinemas and much more providing great savings on many items.

For each book purchased (\$55), the Centre will receive \$11. To find out more, please phone the Environment Centre office on 9545 3077.

# Want to Help or Simply Find Out More?

The Centre has a range of committees dealing with issues in and beyond the Shire. These are listed with the names of their convenors below. If you would like more information about their activities, or would like to help, contact the Centre

Eco-Tourism	John Cox
EMF Radiation	
Environmental education	
Fundraising	
Kurnell	
Nuclear Issues	
Population	
Toxic Chemicals	
Fransport	
Urban Bushland	
Urban Issues	
NB: Fee includes membership for one year plus for	ur issues of "The Centre"
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Web http://ssec.org.au